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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade school psychology has been rapidly developing into a distinct specialty. The current status of this developing specialty is reviewed with respect to delineating the areas of disenchantment and pinpointing new directions within the profession, Considering the variety of models or approaches for guiding school psychology into new directions, it appears that school psychology will continue to offer a diversity of services. Therefore, it is suggested that school psychological services may be delivered on the basis of a multi-purpose, multi-method system. (Author)

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A Review of Plight and Transition in School Psychology

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A Review of Plight and Transition in School Psychology

As school psychological services have rapidly expanded over the past decade, great efforts have been made in developing school psychology as a distinct specialty. Consequently, it would be helpful for school psychology practioners and trainers alike to be knowledgeable about the current status of school psychology's development as a distinct specialty. It is the intent of this article to examine the current status of school psychology with respect to delineating areas of disenchantment and pinpointing new directions within the profession.

The Plight of School Psychology

Discourses on the "plight" of school psychology have frequently appeared in the school psychology literature. This "plight" basically reflects the reported disenchantment with school psychological services. One can gain a flavor of this "plight" by such titles of articles as "The Way of the Dinosaur: Will School Psychologists Become Extinct?" by Mar[illegible]do (1973), "Should Schools Have Psychologists?" by Silberberg and Silberberg (1971), "Can School Psychology Survive in the 70's?" by Clair and Kiraly (1971), and "Will School Psychology Exist?" by White (1968-69). An examination of the school psychology literature reveals several distinct areas of disenchantment with school psychological services.

Overlapping Identities

In an era in which the school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor, etc. perform various services within the school system there has been a problem in the overlapping of function and role among

these pupil personnel specialties. Bardon (1968) has viewed the problem of delineating the school psychologist's identity, responsibilities, and role as reflecting in part the rapid changes of our society in which the school is a primary social institution. In arguing that efforts to delineate the role and functions of school psychologists are useless, Pielstick (1970) states that the rapidly developing field of school psychology "should not be hampered by archaic conceptions of specific roles or specific functions" (p. 317). Reilly (1973) views the search to construct an identity for the school psychologist as producing "a fragmentation of role identities, as a result of which the school psychologist has attempted to be all things to all people" (p. 152).

Specialists Without a Specialty

School psychologists have been characterized as specialists without a specialty (Bardon, 1968). Bardon has stated that school psychologists "have been at the mercy of the vagaries of a changing school, caught with tools borrowed from here and there, in a role without an organized body of knowledge, theory, and techniques--a discipline, if you will--to back it up" (p. 190). Somewhat similarly, Gilmore (1974) attributes school psychology's identity confusion to the profession's adolescent status, which results at best in borrowed identities.

Guests in the House

According to Bardon (1964-65), school psychologists have been considered as "guests in the house" in which the school psychologist's worth to the school is determined by the teachers and parents rather than the opinion of his colleagues. Bardon (1969) furthermore states:

> At the same time the forces in a position to determine the destiny of the specialty have been either nonprofessional or nonpsychological and were motivated by factors which gave attention to the reasons for employing psychologists--to achieve certain results--rather than to the means by which these results might be achieved. . . . Who will and who will not practice with the title of psychologist in the schools has not been determined by psychologists. (pp. 8-9)

Institutional Psychiatry

A comparison has been made between some current practices of school psychologists and those of institutional psychiatrists (Bersoff, 1971b). Viewing the school psychologist as an employee of the school institution, Bersoff poses the question of who is being helped by the school psychologist--the child or the school. Bersoff concludes:

> But, as this article has sought to indicate, in many of his functions--labeling children as retarded, disturbed, or brain-damaged; testing children without their permission and without giving full knowledge of the possible consequences of testing; or removing the child from regular classroom to potentially damaging (or at the best, inconsequential) special classes, school psychologists are very much like the institutional psychiatrist who acts on the basis of force and fraud, and against the best interest of his client, the individual child. (p. 269)

Impracticality of the Clinical Model

Kennedy (1971) believes that a school psychology based on the traditional clinical approach is not practical. Kennedy feels that an

examination of the psychologist-student ratio indicates that the magnitude of student adjustment problems is too large for a clinical model approach in which the psychologist attempts to cope individually with a caseload of problems. Furthermore, Lee (1972) poses the question, "Can school psychologists continue to work with the casualties of the educational system instead of with the system that is producing them" (p. 24)?

Inappropriateness of the Medical Model

The inappropriate use of the medical model by school psychologists among others in the educational environment has been recently discussed by Reger (1972). Reger views the administration of intellectual and personality tests and the classification of students as mentally retarded, brain-injured, etc. by the school psychologist as contributing to the child being seen as a "patient" in the school. According to Reger, when the school's "patient" does not progress well in school, "it is because of him and his condition rather than the school teacher. If he makes too much of a problem for the school, the administration can say, 'We're not set up here to handle that kind of child'" (p. 12). Consequently, Reger calls for defining educational problems in educational terms rather than in pseudo-medical terms which covertly sanction the evasion of responsibility by the school to the child outside the "normal range."

Gatekeeper Between Regular and Special Education

The role of the school psychologist as a "gatekeeper" between regular and special education has been pointed out by Sabatino (1972). Sabatino takes the view that school psychologists have made "special education the cure-all for hundreds of different educational ills" (p. 100). Sabatino

contends that in placing children into special education categories school psychologists have contributed little in the way of educational planning for these children. Similarly, Forness (1970) has stated that the school psychologist "appears unable to move from the analysis of a child's problem to the next logical step: recommendations for remediation. . . . Recommendations tend to be vague or unrealistic and often leave the teacher with nothing but new terminology for an old problem (Rudnick & Berkowitz, 1968)" (p. 96).

Limited Diagnostic Contribution

Concern has been expressed about the diagnostic services provided by school psychologists to special education. Keogh (1972) states that the school psychologist's diagnostic contribution is limited in providing insight into the problem for which the child was referred. Keogh attributes this limited diagnostic contribution to three factors:

> (1) restriction of assessment to a few standardized instruments which provide quantitative rather than functional interpretations; (2) neglect of task and situational conditions which interact with child characteristics to influence learning and performance; and (3) specification of deficits rather than identification of abilities. (p. 141)

Disadvantageous Affiliation with Special Education

The disadvantages of school psychology's jurisdictional affiliation with special education have been pointed out by Bersoff (1971a). The major problem as seen by Bersoff with this affiliation is that the school psychologist has to spend a major portion of his time in evaluating exceptional children to meet state requirements. Bersoff contends that the school

psychologist should spend more time on the wider problems affecting the total school environment where an emphasis can be made on prevention of problems.

School Psychology in Transition

So far an attempt has been made to outline the dimensions of the current disenchantment with school psychological services. Yet, the profession can be described as being in a state of transition. Several models or approaches have been suggested in seeking to guide school psychology into new directions.

Systems Change Agent

Several writers have proposed that the school psychologist should function as a change agent of the educational system. For example, Granowsky and Davis (1974) believe that the school psychologist can help the members of the educational system interact in such a way that existing problems are brought to the surface and dealt with. The entire school, including the teachers, administrators, and special teachers would receive the resources of the psychologist.

Lee (1972) has proposed that the school psychologist should become involved in providing systems analysis and management consultation, and in functioning as a researcher and change agent within the educational system. Lee has identified the following areas as examples of psychological services making meaningful and effective contributions to the total school system: needs assessment, research, program development, accountability, organization development, staff development, and community relations.

Reilly (1973) has suggested that school psychologists can be trained to provide either individual and small group intervention or larger scale intervention in the school system. Reilly envisions that a school psychologist trained at the individual and small group intervention level "would be called upon to provide services and technical assistance according to his competency and the needs of the system" (p. 153). Some possible characteristics of this level of school psychological services would be the hiring of psychologists by state departments of education, deployment on a regional basis, specialization of approaches, and achieving particular objectives within a given school system. A school psychologist trained at the larger scale intervention level would serve as the director of psychological services for a school system. This psychologist would have the responsibility to assess, evaluate, and consult at a systems level, establishing broad systems objectives as well as identifying the need for specific intervention approaches at the individual and small group level of intervention.

Community-Based Service

Bardon (1968) has enumerated on a "non-school psychology" model in which there would be someone similar to a community psychologist whose background is a combination of both clinical and social psychology. This psychologist would operate from a comprehensive community mental health center and the school system would be considered as one of the various social agencies which would utilize his consultation services. At the same time, there would be a group of school technicians who would test, classify, and prescribe recommendations for referred children.

Reilly (1968-69) introduced a conceptual model which focuses on the relationship between the goals of the community and the role of the school psychologist. Reilly's model utilizes the concept discussed by Bardon and Bennett (1967) that the school psychologist must understand the setting in which he functions. He extends the concept and suggests that just as the individual child cannot be divorced from the classroom setting, neither can the school be isolated from the community and society within which it operates. Granowsky and Davis (1974) suggest the feasibility of the school psychologist as an affiliate of a community-based mental health center, rather than a particular school system. He would serve as a consultant to the schools and his base of operations would be a clinic that is administratively independent of the schools. The psychologist would provide services in assessment, consultation and therapy, and program implementation.

Klosterman (1974) cites a number of ways in which the school psychologist as a member of a community mental health center team can serve the schools. He provides evaluations and recommendations for remediation that can involve the whole family if necessary. The school psychologist in such a setting would work with the teacher and serve as the liaison between the community mental health center and the school.

University Based Service

Bardon (1968) has discussed the "school psychology" model in which there would be a doctoral specialty based on the idea that the school is a unique setting which calls for a psychology to study how the child interacts with his school environment and to develop techniques to optimally enhance this interaction. Most of the current school psychologist's

functions would be performed by various pupil personnel workers who would be trained as educational specialists in guidance, testing, child development, etc. According to Bardon, these educational specialists would utilize the doctoral level school psychologist as a resource agent who assists them "to translate the accumulated knowledge and current views in the behavioral sciences to the solution of school problems which fall within their realm of concern" (p. 193). The doctoral level school psychologist would be based in a college or university setting, conducting research, and serving the schools in both an advisory and supervisory capacity.

Consultation Model

Meyers (1973) has proposed a consultation model for school psychological services. This model stresses indirect service, personal communication with school personnel, reduced time devoted to individual testing, and a focus on observable behavior and extrapersonal causes. The model includes four levels of functioning for the school psychologist. The first level would provide direct service to the child in which the primary focus is on direct contacts with the referred child. The second level would provide indirect service to the child in which the primary goal is to change the child's observable behavior in the classroom through the use of the teacher. The third level would provide direct service to the teacher in which the primary goal is to change the teacher's behavior in order to improve the teacher's ability to function effectively with all children in the classroom. The last level would provide service to the school system in which the primary goal is to change the behavior of various subgroups within the school in order to develop innovations and to improve the general functioning of the school.

In her review of school psychology consultation, Gallesich (1974) has delineated six consultation models that are currently being implemented in the school setting. A synopsis of these models follows.

Consultation to transit information. This method is direct and didactic. The consultant may lecture, show films or lead workshops in order to bring knowledge to an organization. The assumption is that cognition effects change, and so information services are given primary emphasis.

Medical model consultation. This model stresses clinical diagnosis and recommendation, and is modeled after medical practice. The main goal is to alleviate stress and prescribe "cures". There are two types of "patients" served by this model: the pupil, or an organization, such as a school system or district.

Program consultation. In this model, the consultant uses demonstrations and teaching to help the staff attain the goals of innovative funded programs in the schools.

Process consultation. The focus here is on the processes of groups, organizations and systems. This model was developed by NTL. Consultants attempt to change the organization's norms in humanistic directions and to create mechanisms to deal with change. Interpersonal processes such as communication and decision making are stressed. The consultant's main roles are facilitator and model. He uses process observation and feedback, training, team-building and action research to attain his goals.

Advocacy consultation. This model grew out of the social action movement of the 1960's. The advocacy consultant is often the initiator of the helping relationship, and even works without full organizati n sanction. The whole community is the client, not the established institution. Working

in this capacity, the consultant "serves his clients directly as an educator and catalyst and indirectly as their advocate with institutional representatives" (p. 141).

Mental health consultation. The emphasis of this model is on developing client coping skills. This model is associated with the public health movement of the 1950's, and evolved in response to an overload of requests for direct clinical services. Consultants attempt to develop the knowledge and skills of the clients (such as teachers and staff) with the goal of preventing mental illness.

Child Advocacy

According to Mearig (1974), child advocacy is becoming an important concept as well as practice in education. Mearig believes that school psychology provides an ideal opportunity for many child advocacy concepts to be implemented. Hyman and Schreiber (1975) assert that the school psychologist "is and must be a child advocate" (p. 50). Their view is based on the premise that the child and not the school system is the major client for the school psychologist. Furthermore, they reject the role of the school psychologist as omsbudsman on the basis of implied neutrality. According to Hyman and Schreiber, the focus of the school psychologist's role is that of advocacy. They have identified several areas in which school psychologists can work as effective child advocates. The first broad area concerns the beating of children. The school psychologist as child advocate would work in identifying, reporting, and following-up on suspected cases of child abuse, and would sensitize other school personnel as to their

responsibilities for reporting child abuse. The school psychologist would also work torwards the prevention of corporal punishment by organizing crisis intervention services and teaching teachers alternative ways of handling children. Hyman and Schreiber also consider the area of confidentiality and parents' right to information within the realm of the school psychologist as child advocate. The school psychologist would apprise parents of their legal rights, interpret to parents the results of evaluations and inform them of major recommendations concerning their child.

Applied Behavior Analysis

Bijou (1970) believes that the school psychologist can perform at least four functions in schools which utilize the principles of applied behavior analysis in all aspects of education. First, the school psychologist would work closely with kindergarten and first-grade teachers in preventing school retardation and behavior problems of newly admitted children. Secondly, the school psychologist would assist counselors, teachers, school social workers, and parents in establishing behavior modification programs to remediate problem behavior. Thirdly, the school psychologist would assist teachers in handling problems of classroom management and subject matter programming. Finally, the school psychologist would conduct in-service training programs for teachers and others for the purpose of informing them of advances in teaching technology and of the specific ways of incorporating these advances into the school system. For Bijou the school psychologist would not be simulating the role of child psychiatrist, performing as a part-time clinical psychologist, or serving as a full-time psychometrician. Instead, the school psychologist would be "a person informed and skilled in the application of behavioral principles to all aspects of teaching both normal and handicapped children" (p. 69).

Additionally, Levine (Note 1) has suggested the application of applied behavior analysis techniques directly with children. The focus of this approach is on the development of appropriate self-management skills in primary grade children. Furthermore, rather than focusing on the teacher as the agent of change, Levine suggests that the school psychologist enter the classrooms directly and "teach" the children how to apply self-management skills. Levine has indicated that school psychology can and ought to be assisting the great majority of children who do not have academic, social or behavioral problems.

Summary and Conclusion

At this point in time school psychology can be seen as being forced by its "plight" into a state of transition. The very fact that so many models have been proposed indicates that there is no one set of functions which has a monopoly on the title "school psychologist." However, as Granowsky and Davis (1974) suggest, "Considering the variety of communities and types of schools and services, it may be that the application of school psychology will continue to diversify models in response to diversification of settings, needs, and resources" (p. 415). Levine (Note 2) has extended Granowsky and Davis' suggestion by recommending the development of a system of psychological services whereby many of the functions which have been discussed as separate models would be combined. He has stated that due to the fact that school psychologists are called upon to perform many disparate activities, only a system which incorporates many methods and models can possibly be satisfactory. Incorporated in this multi-purpose, multi-method system would be a variety of functions and models, such as

consultation, child advocacy, systems analysis, psychoeducational models, and self-management training.

An attempt has been made here to indicate some new directions which have been suggested that school psychology may be heading in the near future. Whether the outcome of these new directions will remedy the areas of current disenchantment and prevent future disenchantment remains to be assessed. Additionally, more time is needed to determine which model or combination of models will be most productive. At this point in time one can only see school psychology being forced by its "plight" into a state of transition.

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Footnotes

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